The Mine Medical Professionals Association (MMPA) held its 22nd Annual Congress from 25 to 26 October 2019 at the serene Misty Hills Country Hotel in Muldersdrift, Gauteng. The theme for the Congress was *Embracing challenges: attain sustainable occupational health and safety*.

The objective of raising the profile of occupational medicine in the mining industry was achieved, partly due to the huge turnout at the Congress. Occupational health practitioners (OHPs) from as far as the Northern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Free State provinces attended. The Congress was a great opportunity for OHPs to be updated on different topics that are relevant in the mining occupational health space.

**THE DELEGATES**

The wide variety of delegates included representatives from the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (DMR), the Mine Health and Safety Council (MHSC), the National Institute for Occupational Health, the Minerals Council of South Africa, the University of the Witwatersrand, Pretoria University, Rand Mutual Assurance, the Compensation Commissioner, and the Medical Bureau for Occupational Diseases, as well as independent occupational medical practitioners (OMPs) and audiologists. Delegates were welcomed by the MMPA President, Dr Muofhe Murwamphida, and the programme director was Dr Jameson Malemela.

**SESSIONS AND HIGHLIGHTS**

The first session of day one, ‘Occupational health: status and compensation Acts’, looked at the history of OH and the amendments pertaining to the compensation Acts, namely, the Occupational Diseases in Mines and Works Act (ODMWA), and the Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act (COIDA). The second session theme was ‘Addressing TB/HIV management challenges in SAMI’, with Royal Bafokeng Platinum and Harmony Gold presenting their strategies on tuberculosis (TB) and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). The third session covered ‘Ethics and the law in OH’, looking at ethical
dilemmas and dual loyalties of OMPs. The session also addressed the challenges of cannabis testing and the law, focussing on the importance of having an appropriate policy and not using the tests to punish employees.

The last session of Day One was on ‘Sustainability in OH’, which kicked off with a presentation on the 4th industrial revolution in OH, and addressed the value of collecting occupational health and safety data.

The day ended on a high note with the Gala Dinner. The guest speaker, Mr Satchmore Muchiriri, was from Ignite Potential Solutions. The Deputy President, Dr Dipalesa Mokoboto, served as the Master of Ceremonies, and the delegates unwound while being entertained by singer, Lungi, who kept them on their feet.

Day Two comprised two sessions. The first addressed ‘Developments in the OH space’ pertaining to noise best practice, from MOSH; amendments to the noise guidelines and outcomes of the verification of standard threshold shift (STS) cases. The second session dealt with ‘What the OHP needs to know’, with presentations covering research done through the MHSC to assess the ratio of OHPs to the number of employees being serviced, statutory reporting to the DMR pertaining to occupational diseases, and the latest technology in the prevention of noise-induced hearing loss that can be used during medical surveillance.

**TAKE-HOME MESSAGE**

The MMPA should be considered as the learning hub for OMPs in the mining industry, reminding OMPs that they are bound by medical ethics and should regularly update themselves with the latest information. Delegates were informed that the MMPA will be holding quarterly symposiums until the next Annual Congress in October 2020. General comment from delegates was that they found the Congress interesting and well worth attending.

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